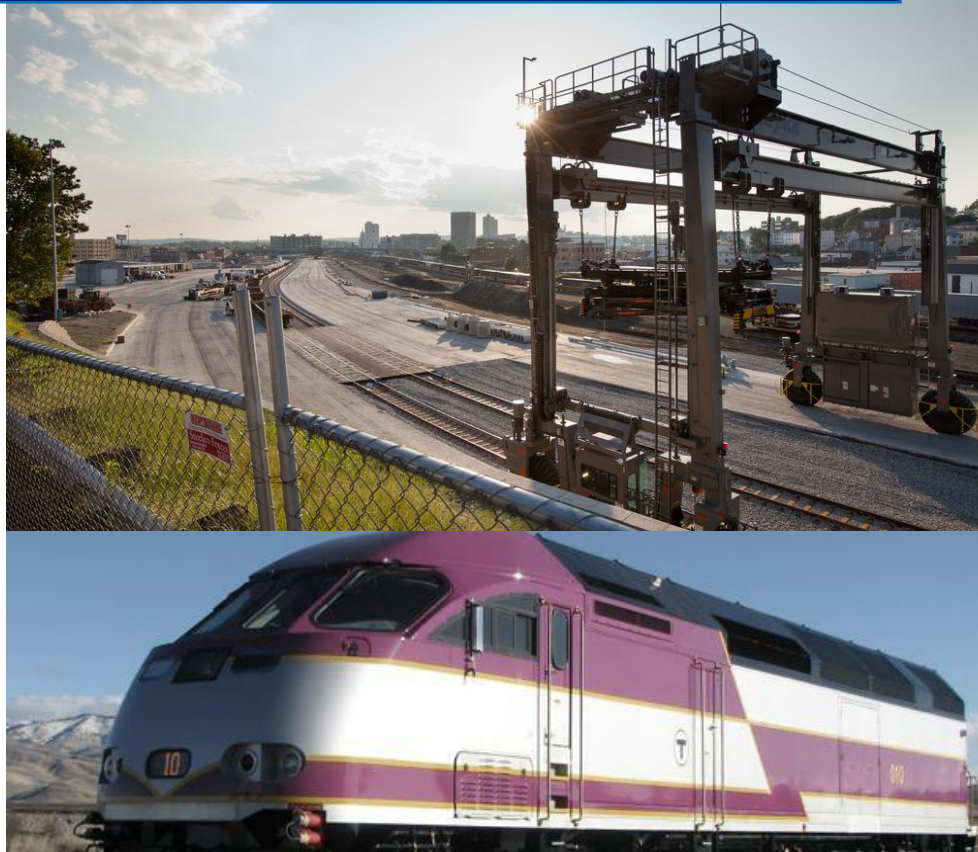




**Office of Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray**

## **Report of Progress: Transforming the Rail Network for Economic and Community Development**



**September 2012**

## A Milestone for Massachusetts

October of 1826 marked the beginning of a transportation revolution in the United States, when freight rail cars began hauling granite blocks from the Quincy quarries to the docks on the Neponset River to then ship to Charlestown to build the Bunker Hill Monument. The three-mile-long Granite Railway, designed and built by Gridley Bryant of Scituate, was the first commercial railroad in the country and a technological achievement that prefaced the economic expansion and cultural migration that railroads would bring to America.

In October of 2012, Massachusetts will reach another milestone in the state's history of rail operations. The completion of a far-reaching rail initiative will transform the state's major interstate freight rail corridor, expand passenger rail service through Middlesex and Worcester counties, improve air quality and ease congestion by reducing car and truck traffic on the highways. This initiative will also set the stage for reinstituting passenger service to the South Coast, and enable one of the most significant redevelopment projects in Boston's history.

This report summarizes the elements of the strategic rail initiative which will be finalized through the October 2012 closing of an historic set of agreements between the Commonwealth and CSX Corporation, a national railroad carrier. This report also serves as a call to action for leaders in the public and private sectors across Massachusetts, who must take concrete steps to realize the transformational economic and community development opportunities that are enabled by the evolving rail system.



A 1934 photo of a preserved section of the Granite Railway in Quincy. Photo: Library of Congress



In February of 2011, a new locomotive arrives at South Station for commuter rail service.

## Rail as Strategic Priority

Since taking office in 2007, improving the state's transportation infrastructure has been a strategic priority of the Patrick-Murray Administration. The system of highways, bridges, seaports, airports and rail lines across the Commonwealth form the enabling network of the state's economy, yet for too long had been neglected. Of all these transportation modes, the rail system in Massachusetts faced some of the greatest challenges due to antiquated infrastructure and underutilized rail lines. Despite these challenges, the Administration recognized the rail network had the greatest potential for transformational economic and community development because of existing, if underutilized, rail corridors.

On July 12, 2006, while still Mayor of Worcester, Timothy Murray testified at a hearing of the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation, advocating for a renewed focus on, and investments in, the state's rail system. In his testimony that day, Murray said:



Governor Deval Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray confer before the June 2011 groundbreaking ceremony for CSX \$100 million rail yard improvement and expansion project in Worcester.

*"Massachusetts is at an economic crossroads. We need to grow our economy in ways that help foster high-wage job creation, affordable housing, environmental protection and Smart Growth principles that enhance the quality of life in our communities. In this effort, our commuter rail system could play a vital role were it not suffering from deferred maintenance, unreliable service and insufficient access for many areas of the state. At the root of these problems is a lack of investment, a lack of coordination and a lack of leadership for rail issues at the state executive level.*

*"Transit-oriented development is essential to our state's ability to grow over the long term. It is imperative for Massachusetts to develop and maintain an advanced intermodal transportation system, with robust levels of commuter and freight rail service, linking Boston, Worcester, Springfield and the major urban and suburban areas of the state. We should also be establishing better partnerships with our neighboring states to prioritize and complete regional infrastructure enhancements, and to lobby federal officials to develop an aggressive transportation funding plan to help pay for those needed rail investments."*

Murray's testimony helped to frame the guiding principles of the Patrick-Murray Administration's rail initiatives. Taking a strategic approach from the start, the Administration created a new executive level rail division and launched the first comprehensive rail planning process for Massachusetts since the 1980s, and the first ever to be fully integrated with a multimodal freight analysis.

Following an extensive public process, the *Massachusetts State Rail Plan* was completed in September of 2010 and now serves as the Commonwealth's 20-year plan for enhancing freight and passenger rail transportation.

As part of the 20-year plan, since 2008, Massachusetts has strategically invested close to \$1 billion in the state's rail system through competitive grants, public funds and private sector capital. These investments, some ongoing, represent the most significant improvements in the Commonwealth's rail system as a whole in decades.

For details on these investments, analysis of the rail system, and specific priorities for future improvements to support economic and community development the

*Massachusetts State Rail Plan* is available online at:

[www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/RailPlan.aspx](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/RailPlan.aspx).

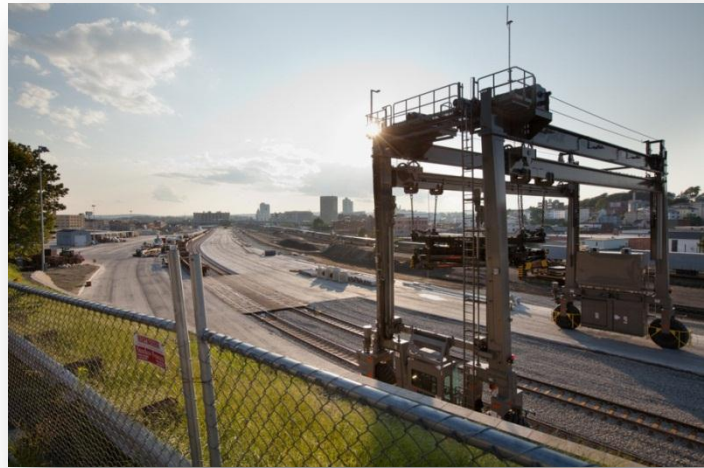
## Historic Compact

The Patrick-Murray Administration is investing in ongoing rail projects throughout the state including the Knowledge Corridor project in the Pioneer Valley, restoration of Springfield's Union Station, and improvements on the rail line from Boston to Fitchburg. However, the ramifications of the compact with CSX are the most transformative. With Lieutenant Governor Murray leading the Administration's team, working closely with municipal, state and federal officials, the Commonwealth successfully negotiated a complex set of agreements with CSX that will transfer ownership and control of approximately 92 miles of rail lines to the state and will allow for:

- Expanding commuter rail service to the Metrowest/Worcester areas by taking ownership and control of the rail line between Framingham and Worcester.



- Raising the railroad bridge clearances from Westborough to the New York State line to allow, for the first time in state history, the double-stacking of full-size freight containers on trains serving Massachusetts. This will increase freight capacity, reduce costs, and give Massachusetts companies better access to national and Asian markets.
- Making possible the eventual restoration of commuter rail service to the South Coast by taking ownership of the rail lines that run from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River.
- Relocating the CSX freight rail operations from the Beacon Park Yard in Boston to rail yards in Westborough, Worcester and West Springfield. This relocation will allow for the redevelopment of an 80+- acre parcel along the Charles River to serve as a new gateway district for the city.



A crane used to transfer containers at the CSX rail yard in Worcester

The compact was finalized in two parts, beginning with an initial closing in June of 2010, which set the entire project in motion, including the permitting processes and infrastructure work needed to allow for the relocation of CSX operations. The second closing, scheduled for October of 2012 will complete the full transaction. In total, the Commonwealth will pay CSX \$100 million for:

- 37 miles of rail lines running south from Taunton to Fall River and New Bedford
- 45 miles of the Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail line between Boston and Worcester
- 8 miles known as the Grand Junction, which runs from Allston, across the Charles River, through Cambridge, Charlestown, Everett and Chelsea
- 2 miles known as the Boston Terminal Running Track which extends from Dorchester to South Boston, and including the West First Street Yard

As part of this public-private partnership, CSX is investing \$129 million at rail yards in Worcester, Westborough and West Springfield to expand and enhance freight services throughout the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth and CSX are working together to complete bridge work at 31 locations across the state, from the New York boarder to Worcester, to raise the clearance to allow for the double-stacking of full-size freight containers. Through this initiative, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation will raise clearances at 14 of those locations (public bridges) by investing \$72 million and CSX is completing the work for the remaining sites at its own expense.

## Worcester and Metrowest: Impact and Opportunities

### *Commuter Rail Service*

Upon finalization of the CSX agreement, the Commonwealth will announce plans to immediately increase commuter rail service on the Framingham/Worcester line between Boston and Worcester. Since the restoration of limited commuter rail service to Worcester in 1994, the importance of linking New England's two largest cities by passenger rail has been clear.

Demand is strong, and is expected to grow, as the increased service attracts more riders and as the Worcester and Metrowest areas of the state continue to rapidly grow in population.

In addition to increased commuter rail service, through the finalized agreement with CSX, the Commonwealth will take control of operations, dispatch and maintenance of the entire rail corridor between Boston and Worcester, bringing a new public focus to improving reliability and on-time performance of the line.

With expanded, enhanced service, ridership on the line is projected to increase some 30 percent by 2030. Over 1/3 of those who ride the line now, board trains on stations west of Framingham. If all commuters who use the Framingham/Worcester line today instead



Union Station in Worcester  
Photo: Rob Carlin

drove cars to work each day, it would increase daily traffic on the Massachusetts Turnpike by approximately 8 percent.

### ***Freight Rail Service***

CSX is investing \$100 million in Worcester to expand and modernize its operations there, and to allow for the relocation of the intermodal container operations now in Boston. This investment has created approximately 380 construction jobs, with 85 permanent jobs to remain at the yard when the project is completed.

Intermodal containers are the large cargo boxes that can travel by ship, rail or truck. The CSX yard in Worcester processes approximately 110,000 intermodal containers annually, and that number is expected to grow to 150,000 annually in the near future and 200,000 annually in the long term. This expansion and increased capacity further establishes Worcester as the freight rail hub for New England.

CSX has also invested \$19 million to renovate and re-purpose its rail yard in Westborough for use as a TRANSFLO operation. The project has created approximately 106 construction jobs, with 8 full-time permanent positions to remain in the yard. CSX has owned the Westborough yard for many years, and the site was used as an automotive rail terminal for decades. The TRANSFLO unit, which will be relocated to Westborough from Boston, receives bulk shipment of liquids like corn syrup, ethanol and industrial commodities that arrive on rail tankers and are transferred to tanker trucks for delivery to businesses that do not have a direct rail connection.



Expansion and modernization at CSX rail yard in Worcester

### ***Impact on Economic and Community Development***

The expansion and improvement of commuter rail service on the Framingham/Worcester line, coupled with the freight rail investments in Worcester and Westborough enable important opportunities for a wide range of economic and community development projects in Central Massachusetts and Metrowest communities.

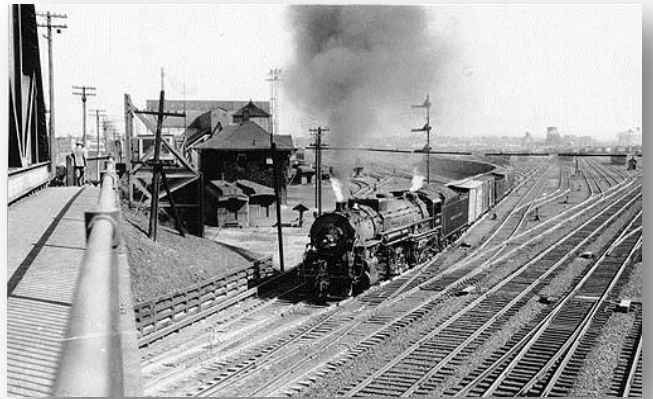
Transit oriented investments and Smart Growth developments are a reality. Today in Worcester, the existing commuter rail service and the prospect of 20 round-trip trains to Boston has been the major driving force in the realization of more than \$500 million of mixed use development now underway or in final planning for downtown Worcester and surrounding neighborhoods. Similarly, the additional commuter rail service and improvements to crossings in downtown Framingham will help activate new and exciting development opportunities in Framingham, Ashland and other communities that are envisioned in several economic development studies completed by local planners.

### **Boston's New Gateway: Impact and Opportunities**

The stretch of land in Allston along the Charles River between Cambridge Street and Boston University's Nickerson Field became an active rail yard in the 1890s when a shuttered horse racing track known as Beacon Park was sold to the Boston and Albany Railroad.

The area is known today as the Beacon Park Yard, operated by CSX. With the new compact requiring CSX to move its operations west, the future use of Beacon Park Yard will take a dramatic turn. The completion of the CSX compact opens up nearly 80 acres at Boston's western gateway for transformative redevelopment.

CSX currently operates at Beacon Park Yard under the terms of a perpetual railroad easement. The land at the yard was owned by the former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority until 2003 when it sold the property to Harvard University for \$75 million. The real estate was sold subject to the easements for existing and future rail yard operations and



Then and now: two views of Beacon Park Yard from a similar vantage point. The photo above is circa 1930, courtesy of Brighton/Allston Historical Society. Current photo by: t55z on flicker.com



the Turnpike's travel lanes, exit ramps and infrastructure that traverse the site.

It has been publically reported that Harvard University and CSX have reached an agreement in principle for the university (through a separate development arm) to buy the CSX rail easement and Harvard will take full control of the acreage once CSX operations have been relocated to Worcester and Westborough, and following the decommissioning and environmental analysis of the site.

The CSX relocation will be substantially completed in 2013, so now is the time for all the stakeholders concerned about the future use of the site to engage in a thorough and thoughtful planning process to spur economic and community development.

The Patrick-Murray Administration is committed to working closely with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, city leaders and all stakeholders to share information and plan for what will become one of the largest and most visible redevelopment opportunities in Boston's history. The Beacon Park Yard is a strategic gateway for the city. More than 231,000 vehicles pass the site each day. The proximity to Boston University, Harvard University and the neighborhoods of Allston and Brighton, along with the remaining state transportation assets of the turnpike and the commuter rail lines that will continue to traverse the site, creates a critical mass for one of the state's most significant transit-oriented, Smart Growth development projects.

## **South Coast: Impact and Opportunities**

Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton are the only cities within 50 miles of Boston not currently served by commuter rail. The South Coast region as a whole is comprised of 31 cities and towns with a combined population of approximately 740,000. By 2030, the regional population is projected to grow to more than 900,000, making the South Coast one of the fastest-growing regions of the state. The completion of the CSX compact and the acquisition by the Commonwealth of 37 miles of track from Taunton south was the key enabling event that will allow for the eventual restoration of passenger rail service between Boston and the South Coast.

In parallel with the CSX negotiations, the Administration has worked with municipal, state and federal leaders to advance the complicated economic, community and environmental analyses required to facilitate building a project as significant as the South Coast rail initiative.

After a thorough public process with more than 100 open meetings in the region, the Administration released the *South Coast Rail Economic Development and Land Use Corridor Plan* in June of 2009. As a consensus report, the Corridor Plan charts the way forward with detailed and location-specific analyses of the transit oriented development opportunities that will be catalyzed by the restoration of the rail service, and a program of supportive investments the Administration is targeting for the region.

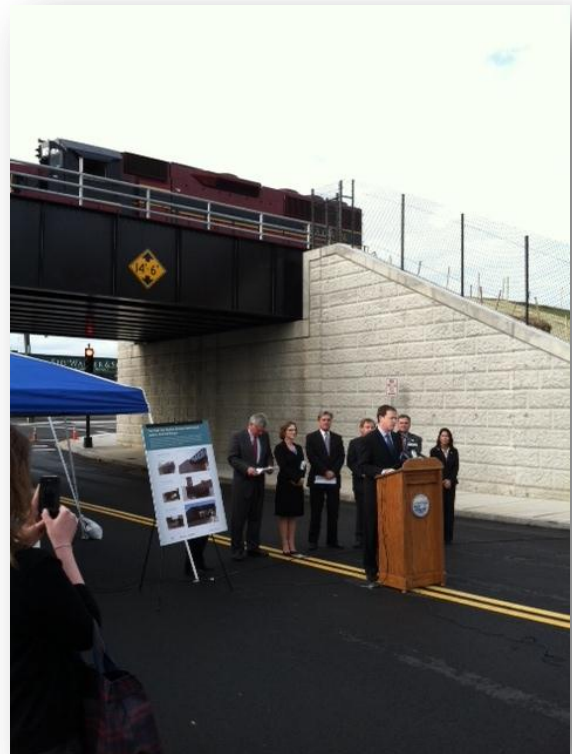
In his cover letter releasing the Corridor Plan, Governor Deval Patrick wrote:

*“To maximize the economic benefits of the South Coast Rail project it is not enough just to reestablish transit connections between the South Coast cities of Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton with Boston. We must plan intentionally and thoughtfully to ensure this investment in transportation catalyzes job creation and housing and encourages this new development to happen in the right places to revitalize our Gateway cities and downtowns.*

*“The Plan calls for creating great places at the new stations – places full of vitality and diversity. By clustering jobs and homes close to the stations through transit-oriented development and “greening” the stations by encouraging renewable energy on site, new neighborhoods will be created. The Plan also identifies priorities for land protection, which will preserve the farms, fields, and forests in every city and town. Protecting working farms, cranberry bogs, habitat, rivers and wetlands is not only important for ecological reasons, but for economic reasons. This rich landscape is central to the South Coast’s quality of life and long-term competitive advantage in the economy.”*

The South Coast Rail Economic Development and Land Use Corridor Plan is available online at: [www.southcoastrail.com/corridor.html](http://www.southcoastrail.com/corridor.html).

All this time, effort and energy has moved the prospect of South Coast commuter rail



On Nov. 29, 2011, MassDOT Secretary Richard Davey joined local and regional officials to celebrate the successful completion of a \$20 million project to reconstruct three structurally-deficient rail bridges in New Bedford that are critical to moving the South Coast Rail project forward.

restoration from a wishful idea to a work-in-progress. Furthermore, the restoration of rail lines in the region will enhance freight rail service across the South Coast, which could be coordinated with short-sea shipping opportunities from the region's ports.

To continue progress on this project, the years ahead will require sustained engagement, not only from state government, but from the region's leadership, both public and private. The Patrick-Murray Administration looks forward to working with community members, local elected officials and the state legislature in the coming months to determine how best to fund South Coast Rail and other important transportation projects.

### Double-Stacking Freight Rail

The Massachusetts rail network is composed of approximately 1,153 route miles of active rail lines, supporting both passenger and freight rail services. In 2007, 17.9 million tons of freight originated, terminated or passed through Massachusetts on rail, while in that same year 239 million tons of freight traveled along Massachusetts' highways by truck. The Commonwealth is also the freight rail gateway for New England, with nearly 40 percent of all freight rail tonnage in the region passing through Massachusetts.

For many classes of freight, rail shipment is a cost-effective and efficient alternative to trucking. Throughout most of the country, freight travels in containers that are double-stacked on flatbed rail cars. In Massachusetts, the age of the state's rail network has been an impediment for double-stacking because of the bridges and tunnels across the state lack clearance for two containers to pass stacked.



A CSX double-stacked freight train in New York  
Photo: Mike Flannery

CSX carries the vast majority of interstate freight rail bound for Massachusetts on double-stacked freight rail cars up until its facilities in Selkirk and Syracuse, New York. Because Massachusetts has not been able to support double-stacking, the double-stacked cars are disassembled or “filleted” in New York and placed on a train one at a time so freight can travel through Massachusetts. This process adds significant time and cost to interstate freight rail service for Massachusetts.

Through the CSX agreement with Massachusetts, the Commonwealth and CSX have partnered to raise the clearance on 31 bridges from the New York State line to Worcester, allowing full scale double-stacking of containers shipped to Massachusetts. During this construction process, the state was responsible for raising clearances on publically owned bridges, while CSX lowered rail beds in other areas to allow for the 20 feet 8 inches in height needed for double-stacked shipments.

The bridge clearance work will dramatically increase the Commonwealth’s freight capacity, providing Massachusetts companies more efficient and cost effective shipment options and easing the burden of increased truck traffic on highways.

Studies indicate shipping bulk goods by rail requires less fuel per mile of tonnage hauled. Therefore, as Massachusetts increases its freight rail usage, it limits the number of trucks on the road and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. According to analysis in the *Massachusetts State Rail Plan*, the opportunity to double-stack freight containers on the CSX rail line, and similar strategic investments in other areas of the network over the next 20 years, will divert 296,800 truck trips from the state’s highways.

# # #



## Next Steps

By finalizing the agreement between CSX and the Commonwealth this October, Massachusetts overcomes the final hurdle in a long, complicated strategic public-private initiative. More importantly, however, it marks the beginning of a new era for freight and passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

It is now imperative for municipal, state and federal leadership, along with the business community and local organizations to remain engaged to fully leverage the positive economic and community development impact that will be enabled by the improving and expanded rail system.

Specifically, the Patrick-Murray Administration is committed to:

### **Boston**

- Work closely with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, business and institutional partners, and all stakeholders to facilitate a comprehensive public planning process for the redevelopment of the Beacon Park Yard to achieve a maximum positive impact for the city and the Commonwealth.

### **Worcester**

- Partner with public and private leadership in Worcester to help advance continued transit-oriented development around Union Station, an intermodal hub (City Square, Canal District, Shrewsbury Street Corridor etc.)
- Pursue important economic growth and job creation opportunities enabled by the expansion of the CSX yard and the double-stacking capabilities in sectors including packaging, distribution, warehouse/logistics and light manufacturing at both existing and new companies.
- Finalize the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Worcester and the city's business development groups to begin an aggressive and sustained business sector and industry outreach program to market new opportunities created by improved rail initiatives and promote new investment and job creation across the region.

**Framingham/Metrowest**

- Collaborate with Westborough leadership, public and private, to maximize the positive impact of enhanced passenger rail service and the TRANSFLO operation.
- Continue to work with Framingham officials to make infrastructure investments to mitigate downtown traffic on Routes 126 and 135.
- Work with municipal officials, legislators and regional planners to develop and implement a transit-oriented economic and community development plan for downtown Framingham.

**South Coast**

- Partner with the elected and private sector leadership of New Bedford, Fall River, Taunton and all 31 communities in the South Coast region to help build consensus around a comprehensive transportation funding plan for Massachusetts that includes the South Coast Rail project and continue the related public investments identified in the Corridor Plan.
- Continue to work with the federal legislative delegation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to finalize the South Coast Rail route location.

**Western Massachusetts**

- Continue to work with Western Massachusetts business organizations, elected and appointed government officials, as well as regional planning organizations to implement and fully leverage rail investments along the Knowledge Corridor rail project (<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/knowledgecorridor/>)
- Explore the feasibility of morning and evening MBTA commuter rail service between Springfield and Boston.

-END-

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